



SATURDAY, AUGUST 30, 1902

## WHAT OF THE WAY

By SARA LINDSAY COLEMAN

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MARGARET flung herself into the heart of the berry bed and drew in deep delicious breaths of the straw-berried air. It was home! Home after months and months of the city.

If things could have continued to run on comfortably she might not have cared to leave the city, but things couldn't.

It wasn't Margaret who wanted one of the affairs to exclude the other. She drove behind Livingston's thoroughbreds or plunged her nose into Graham's roses with equal content. It was the suitors.

Margaret ruffled her brow and, for the hundredth time that day, asked herself which one of the equally charming, amusing fellows it must be. As though in derision a bird some-where above her head cried, "Which? Which?"

"Oh, I don't know," she said aloud. And as she spoke, a tiny, grarled old woman thrust her calico-bonneted head over the fence and peered at the girl with shrewd, kindly eyes. "Don't ye now?" she asked anxiously.

It was only the little old woman who lived at the foot of the hill in a house as small and gray and weather-beaten as herself. Margaret did not answer her questioner; instead she looked at the sun.

"Gittin' on towards the shank o' the evenin' now, ain't it?"

"Yes," said Margaret, with much dignity. She had learned from past experiences that expansiveness wouldn't do in addressing a mountaineer, that is if you yearned for solitude. Mar-



FLUNG HERSELF INTO THE HEART OF THE BERRY BED.

garet wanted to be left alone. She could decide it in five minutes if alone. Of course she was glad to see them, the dear, simple, kindly creatures, but all day long, to use their own expression, she had been "howdy-doing" them. And back in the city were two impatient young fellows who had each been promised a telegram that was definite would be sent them before the sun dropped to bed behind the big hills. Margaret had told herself that she could answer definitely, that she would know the instant she got among her friendly mountains and away from the hurry of life.

"Ef ye ain't shore, tain't the right 'un," came from the depth of the sun-bonnet. "When the right 'un comes hit pears like two big hands git on yer shoulders an' shove ye to him."

"Who said it had a man in it?" un-graciously.

The telegrams had to go, and time counted for something—with everybody, that is, but an old mountaineer, who moved with a hitch in her gait. "Who said hit?" chuckling. "When the palatin' teacher over thar," with a sweep of her lean arm that took in the universe and the village school, "gits restless like and pawns furious, thar's a man at the bottom o' her industry; when the gal ter scrubs her floor gits restless an' scrubs furiously, thar's a man at the bottom o' her industry. Honey, I ben a gal myself. Maybe now, 'persuasive,' 'I could help ye in this diffulty.'"

The girl did not mean to, but she did tell, even to the names of the city men, and laughed a little in the telling, such curious, kindly folks, the mountaineers.

"I mistrust them city chaps," said the voice, almost lost in the sun-bonnet. "How'd a big, strong feller out o' these mountains suit ye? Well, joes! not eggzactly out o' 'em, but adopted left. The settlement loved afore ye left."

"Yes, yes," impatiently. The girl's glance swept hills and valleys to rest on the church spire that lifted its symbolism against the sky's blue. And suddenly the winter back in the city had been a little teacup existence, made up of little men, forever content to dawdle through drawing rooms and drink tea; of hide women who smiled as they stabbed at each other; of smartness and gaiety and emptiness.

"The settlement ain't no Bible," with a shrewd glance at the averted face. "Hit's Bible ter be suddin. Reckon ye heard o' the preacher's work the night the French broad run fer 'em as a wot?"

With a sudden flame in them, the girl's eyes turned towards the sun-bonnet.

"Reckin ye heard o' las' Sunday? The settlement war a holdin' onto his breath. I low we can't keep him allus 'thet ain't the fut call he's got ter burrin parts. He jes' looked gran' honey, an' his eyes blazed. Ole M. Kuydendall's shoutin' couldn't draw him. But I must git on. Reckin 's know'd Floridy Higgins war hon' agin? Jes' a pink-faced doll, hone. But men air needy creatures, an' powerful easy fooled. I low now, ridit about so much with her in her new buggy, an' the settlement lows—Law honey, ye look tuckered out! A ol' woman that talks too much 't jes' b a-hobblin' on."

Margaret had solitude at last. She ate a strawberry and found it insipid. It had rained too much. It always rains too much in big, desolate rattle-snaky mountains.

A half hour later she turned in the direction of the village. She was going to send the telegrams. One of them, it didn't much matter which would hold but one word, a word phonetic of joy or sorrow.

At the foot of the hill she stopped on the bridge; but she wasn't thinking of telegrams. She was praying that a mountain peak might topple over on him and save him from Florida Higgins.

The whirl of reckless wheels fell on her ears. A horse came round the hill's curve, running. The holding back strap had broken and crazed him with terror. He ran in short, affrighted leaps that rocked the buggy ominously.

As Margaret dashed across the bridge to safety she saw that the buggy's one occupant, Florida Higgins, was crouched in the bottom of the vehicle in a terrified little heap, her hands clinging to the dashboard. She saw, too, the tree that divided the road narrowly above the bridge. If the horse swerved too much trying to escape the tree, he would plunge down the bank and into the water, gleaming 20 feet below the roadbed.

For one sickening moment the girl hesitated, the next her strong young fingers caught the bit just under the foaming mouth and she was jerked by the rearing horse into unending space. Jerked and lifted and let down, lifted and let down and jerked, and shaken, and whirled in what seemed to her falling senses to be a monster churn that meant to crush the life out of her. And then she slipped down, down, with the gurgle of running waters in her ears, down—and into utter darkness.

The house into which Margaret was carried was little and low and old, like its owner, who had looked over her garden fence an hour before.

In an incredibly short time the house was filled with moving, useless people.

It was the preacher who tumbled them out unceremoniously, and towered, big and powerful, over the doctor who thought it might end in coma.

The preacher bent over the motionless figure and called softly.

"It's no use," the doctor said. "She's going to live," he said, doggedly. And he forced brandy through her lips.

A half hour passed. The room was still, except for the man's calling, just over his breath.

"It's no use," the doctor said again. "She's going to live," the preacher shouted. An again he called, called and called and called, loud and loud and louder, until the claxon ring of his voice pierced through the mists that held her quiet figure in the borderland that divides.

For one deliciously irresponsible moment of consciousness Margaret lay listening, so still was the room, to the little clicking catch in the preacher's watch as it hurried the seconds away. Then she opened her eyes full on the lean, powerful young figure that bent over her.

"Florida?" she asked faintly.

"Ain't scratched," said the doctor gruffly.

"I'm glad," she whispered, and turned her eyes to where the sun, red and glorious, was dropping down the sky. The hills were faint and far off; the valleys brimmed with mist.

As fast as the high in her waist would allow the little old woman crossed the room. She dropped beside the girl's bed and cried, the tears running down her cheeks:

"Hit war a lie! He ain't never rid in her buggy ter my knowledge. Hit war tole that good might come o' hit, the the Lord's whopped me. He don't want lies."

Margaret's hand went out to rest on the bowed head, her eyes sought the preacher's sudden light in them.

"I thought ye war dead," the old voice wailed. "I know'd ye'd not rest easylike an' them telegrams not sent. I sent 'em with butter money. I remembered the fellars' names. I sed: 'She war too good fer ye, an' the Lord tuk her.' Maybe now," gulping and swallowing and sobbing, "I'd better go back an' say hit's the Lord's servant."

The sun went down in a gulf of glory. Margaret watched it out of sight behind the far, far hills, her cheek cradled in the minister's big brown palm.

Natural Deduction.

Attorney—What do you do during the week?

Witness—Nothing.

"And on Sunday?"

"I take a day off."

"How long have you had a political job?"—Cincinnati Enquirer.

One Kind of Peace.

In the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony, if the present rate of intermarriage between Briton and Boer is kept up, says the African Review, within 20 years the two races will be so welded together as to be indistinguishable.

Ancient Affection.

Appendicitis has been supposed to be a modern disease, but traces of it have been found in Egyptian mummies.

Not to Be Found.

Whiner—It's awfully hard lines, but do what I will, I can't find food for my wife and children.

Hustler—No more can I. I have to work for it, and jolly hard, too—Ally Elopier.

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As a person of an inquiring mind may ask the reason why. It is simply that these adventurers do not take the trouble to study human nature. They do not spend their thoughts for a moment with acquiring the art of phraseology and kindred branches that will have a tendency to make the pathway to the road of the business clear and devoid of all obstacles.

It is a sad and terrible fact that persons who come for advice in full knowledge of what they want to know, and yet as soon as they confront a medium, they turn away and say, "I don't believe in it." They are the ones who place their trust in a true medium that can stand the test of what he or she claims.

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